

**JOINT STATEMENT FROM STATE BAR PRESIDENT KAREN NOBUMOTO
AND CONFERENCE OF DELEGATES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
CHAIR STEPHEN MARSH**

The legal separation of the Conference of Delegates from the State Bar of California will benefit both groups. Reconstituting the Conference as an independent nonprofit entity will enable it to speak freely on issues of concern to the legal profession and the people of California, without the limitations that necessarily accompany the Bar's role as a regulatory agency.

At the same time, in its new status as an organization separate from the State Bar, the Conference will still be able to provide the Bar with the benefits of its expertise, and to recommend to the Bar statutory changes to improve California's system for the administration of justice, without involving the Bar in issues that lie outside of its mission and purpose. The Conference and the Bar stand at their most positive juncture since Gov. Wilson's 1997 veto of the fee bill.

The Conference of Delegates was created as a means whereby the State Bar could obtain local bar input into and support for its legislative program. Throughout its history, the Conference has served as a forum whereby members of local, specialty and minority bar associations could have a say in the law-making process in California.

It is a forum for debate which benefits the law-making process by generating numerous proposed changes in the law, providing detailed analyses with arguments pro and con, and inspiring high-quality debate among some of California's finest attorneys. During its more than 70-year tenure, literally hundreds of Conference resolutions in every area of legal practice have been ultimately enacted into law.

In response to concerns about the use of mandatory dues, the Legislature required that the Conference of Delegates be self-funded. No mandatory fees may be used to support any of the Conference's activities.

By authorizing the Conference to incorporate as a nonprofit professional or trade association, a status which brings with it the ability to lobby without restriction, the Board of Governors has removed both the direct control of the Conference by the State Bar and restrictions which prevented the Conference from addressing many issues it wished to discuss.

The Conference, which likely will be called the Conference of Delegates of California Bar Associations (CDCBA), will continue to meet annually in conjunction with the State Bar's annual meeting.

The State Bar will continue to collect voluntary contributions for the Conference via the State Bar's yearly fee bill sent to all members. The Conference and the Bar likely will enter into a contract to enable those things.

To facilitate this transition, the Bar will seek legislative authority to allow it to continue collecting donations to the Conference in the Bar's annual billing to lawyers.

The changes envisioned by both the Board of Governors and the Conference will allow the newly incorporated Conference to return to an open debate of all issues confronting California lawyers without the fear that such debate will negatively impact the State Bar as a whole.

Our relationship will be recast in a positive way: complementary bodies working, each in its own way, towards the perfection of justice in California. The discord inherent in the relationship of an independently funded body restricted from taking independent positions will ease and, we hope, disappear. We have learned the difficult lessons taught us by the courts, the Legislature and a former governor.

We are now prepared to use these lessons to our advantage, by creating a new relationship between an improved State Bar and a new, more effective Conference of Delegates that stands to work to the great advantage of both.